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United for Quality Care

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New Haven

SEIU District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

My name is Lynne Zimmer and I am a Consumer-Employer living in New Haven. I am here to ask you to do the right thing by PCAs and Consumers like me. Connecticut can do better.

I'm from Washington State but moved to Connecticut after having a stroke and being diagnosed with heart failure in 2018. I was a psychotherapist before I had my stroke. I have two grown children who have their own lives, and they could not care for me, so I knew I needed a homecare provider.

It was much harder to get homecare services here than it was in my home state of Washington, but finally, with my kids' help, I qualified for the waiver program. The best thing about the homecare waiver program is my PCA, Anthony. He can see my needs before I ask, and he reminds me of my children.

However, the worst thing about this program are the poverty wages PCAs earn and the fact that PCAs have no benefits. PCAs like Anthony make wages that keep them in poverty. PCAs can barely afford to pay for food, utilities, and rent, let alone save for their future.

To make things worse, without paid time off. PCAs must constantly choose between earning money or taking time off when they're sick. If my PCAs get sick and come here to me, I get sick and I have to go to the hospital because I am that compromised. Then they lose more wages while I'm hospitalized. It's a vicious cycle.

In Washington, things were different. It was easier to get services, my case worker did a lot more to support me there, and my PCAs had health insurance and paid time off. Connecticut needs to do better by PCAs and Consumers. All working people should earn a living wage, have health insurance, paid sick time, and retirement benefits, especially PCAs who selflessly take care of consumers like me. Thank you.